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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

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COUNTRY French Indo China

SUBJECT The Nationalist Front

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SUPPLEMENT

1. The Nationalist Front has existed in a modified form for a number of years. Until recently the two most important components have been the Viet Nam Cach Minh Dong Minh Hoi (The Revolutionary League of Viet Nam, usually called the Dong Minh Hoi) and the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (The National Democratic Party of Viet Nam, usually called the Viet Nam Kuomintang or VNQQD). Although, in the eyes of foreigners, these two parties have been associated with the Chinese Kuomintang, the connection has in fact been very slight and the parties have received little aid from the latter.
2. The primary aim of the Front has been complete independence for Viet Nam. Establishment of a democratic regime, resistance to Communism, and promotion of friendly relations with China have been only secondary considerations. For this reason, in order to put up a united Viet Namese resistance against the French, the Front has collaborated loyally with HO Chi Minh in the past, although they disliked his Communism and his methods. They went so far as to join the short-lived coalition government which was formed in Hanoi in March 1946 under the presidency of HO - a government which was dominated by VO Nguyen Giap and other avowed Communists. Two months later, however, it became clear that the Communist element in the government was using various means to suppress the parties of the Front completely. Relations were strained for some time and a complete break came in the fall of 1946 after the Dalat Conference, at which NGUYEN Tuong Tam was the pre-siding officer. By this time the parties of the Front had become convinced that the French were trying to sabotage their earlier agreements and re-establish the old regime in fact if not in name. It was not perfectly clear whether this attempt was actively sanctioned by d'Argenlieu, but it was certain that it was at least a concerted and deliberate attempt by LeClerc and other high-ranking officers and functionaries. As the Viet Minh Government refused to resist this tendency and HO Chi Minh continued to appease the French, the parties of the Front felt they had no alternative but to break away completely from the Viet Minh and organize their own resistance against the French. After this the French appeared to be trying for a time to backtrack somewhat in their aim to sabotage the agreements. This tendency on the part of the French coincided with the recall of LeClerc and the visit of Moutet. After the break with the Viet Minh, several of the leaders of the parties of the Front retired to China; others went underground or engaged in guerrilla warfare against the French.

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3. Recently the Front has been considerably strengthened by the incorporation of various new parties and organizations. Of these new arrivals, the most important are the following:

a. Viet Nam Dan Chu Xi Hoi Dang (Viet Nam Democratic Socialist Party) which is itself composed of the Viet Nam Quoc Gia Doc Lap Dang (National Independence Party of Viet Nam), the Phat Gia Hoa Hao (Hoa Hao Buddhist Organization) and the Doan The Tri Thuc Nam Bo (Nambo Intellectual Group; Nambo, the name for Cochinchina).

b. The Cao Dai.

- 25X1A6a c. Lien Doan Cong Giao (Viet Nam Christian League). [REDACTED] note: See SO 5002 on the Role of the Church in French Indo China.) The spokesman for these three organs is NGUYEN Hoan Bich (alias NGUYEN Boa Toan). The Front considers these organs a most valuable acquisition as they total about 1,000,000 members exclusive of the Cao Dai, which is only partly a political organ and which in itself totals 1,000,000 members. These three organs are extremely strong in Cochinchina and between them control the Binh Xuyen troops. Compared with the 70,000 members claimed by the VIMQD and the 10,000 claimed by the Dong Minh Hoi this acquisition is very important to the Front. In addition, the Front now contains the Viet Nam Quoc Gia Thanh Hien Doan (Viet Nam Nationalist Youth Movement) and the Doan The Dan Chung (Popular Movement).

4. President of the Front's Governing Committee of 15 is NGUYEN Hai Than. The Secretary-General is NGUYEN Hoan Bich, who is leaving shortly for French Indo China. NGUYEN Tuong Tam has been named Acting Secretary and authorized spokesman.

Negotiations with the French

5. D'Argenlieu sent Cousseau as his accredited representative to talk with Bao Dai about forming a government. Cousseau did not approach him directly but through the Front. The first meeting took place between Cousseau, Bao Dai and representatives of the Front in Hongkong in the latter part of January 1947; the last meeting in early February 1947. It was felt that some progress had been made. Shortly thereafter Cousseau, together with two representatives of the Front (a Mr. Quang and a Mr. Dan) and Bao Dai's representative, TRAN Trong Kim, went to Saigon to see the French High

25X1A6a Commissioner. [REDACTED] comment: According to previous reports, TRAN was accompanied by DINH Xuan Quang, PHAN Huy Dan and LUI Tu'ong Minh.) Source believes they are still waiting in Saigon to see Bollaert, the new High Commissioner and that a resumption of negotiations on a high level will have to wait until the French high policy is crystallized in Paris. Meanwhile, some negotiations have continued on minor matters with Yolle in Hongkong. Yolle, however, is merely an agent of the High Commissioner and not endowed with specific accreditation. The attitude of the French, therefore, remains in doubt. In view of this doubt, the Governing Committee of the Front was determined to approach the United States directly for support without waiting to transmit their terms officially to the French.

Military Position of the Front

- | 6. | a. <u>Number of Troops</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| | 300 | Yunnan, across border from Lao Kay (103-56,22-30). |
| | 300 | Yunnan-Kwangsi area West of Tienpao (106-43,23-23). |
| | 100 | Kwangsi, across border from Mon Cay (107-58,21-32). |

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-3-

These bands escaped into China after the break between Nationalists and the Viet Minh.

Number of TroopsLocation

2000

Mon Cay area

These troops constitute the "Armee Secrete". Most of the time they appear to be peaceably employed, and their arms are kept hidden. From time to time they assemble for guerrilla attacks.

5000

Various places (not stated).

These troops are still nominally under the army of the Viet Minh Government. At a given time, they may be ordered to desert that Army, and come over openly to the Nationalist Front.

200

Area of Thanh Hoa (106-28,10-23).

100

North of Quang Ngai (108-46,15-17).

These - and other - insignificant bands in various areas shift positions frequently.

5000

Cochin China, south of the Bassac River

These are the Binh Xuyen troops.

b. The armament of troops is no more impressive than their numbers. In all, they possess 8-9000 rifles, 100 sub-machine guns and about 10 machine guns. They are short of ammunition. They rely much on homemade grenades. Although the Front has purchased a few arms in Kwangsi, transport difficulties have so far prevented more than a mere handful reaching their destination.

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